

## ATTRACTIVE TERRITORIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

Luciano Carrino, Sara Swartz\*

From 1 May to 31 October 2015, in the KIP Pavilion at Expo Milan 2015, 269 organizations and international networks alternated, illustrating the results and methods of their local development experiences. Participants coming from more than 30 countries<sup>1</sup> showed how the production and consumption of food can be the axis of a sustainable and high quality development when based on enhancing the natural, cultural and human resources of a territory. The entrenchment of local traditions, the capacity for innovation and the collaboration between public, associative and private actors that live and work in the same territory were considered the main factors of their success. The KIP International School entitled its Pavilion “Attractive Territories for a Sustainable World” to summarise this concept: *if everybody collaborates, the territory where we live and work can become harmonious, balanced, inclusive and rich in economic and social relationships, including with other territories.*

In this issue you can find articles from several of the organizations that participated in the activities of the Pavilion and that have used this further opportunity to systematize their experiences. In some cases the articles are real case studies; in others, they are thoughtful descriptions of their authors’ presence in the Pavilion. In fact, for many organizations, participating in the activities of the Pavilion was an occasion to meet actors of their own territory that didn’t habitually work together. In a few cases these organizations undertook a sort of action-research to imagine how to present their territory in an attractive way, bringing together the competences and capacities of each in the process.

The KIP Pavilion, besides wanting to underline the value of an ecologic and participatory local development, also aimed to stimulate dialogue between grassroots experiences, governments, international organizations and the private sector, to work together in building a better quality of development consistent with the orientations of the UN Agenda for 2030 approved by the General Assembly on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015. It wasn’t easy to reach those objectives because Expo had taken on a prevalently commercial character and media attention was focused on food, wine and agricultural products, while development issues risked being ignored. But we hoped that at least a small part of the twenty million expected visitors would stop in the Pavilion. The visitors, instead, proved to be more open and curious than we could have imagined. Many of them, in fact, were interested in the 58 exhibitions and 14 international meetings that were hosted in the Pavilion.

---

\* Luciano Carrino is President of the KIP International School.

Sara Swartz is Director of the Universitas Programme of the KIP International School.

<sup>1</sup> Among which: Albania, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Cipro, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Japan, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iceland, Italy, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Holland, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Dominican Republic, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Uruguay.

The position of the Pavilion - the first after the main entrance and that hosted the UN Garden - made it very visible. Furthermore, its outdoor spaces attracted visitors' attention with a variety of activities organized by schools, associations, musical bands, street artists, artisans and other groups that illustrated their abilities and involved visitors in debates and performances. In this lively and multicultural atmosphere, the exhibitions of the organizations that wrote the articles of this issue of *Universitas Forum* took place.

Slowly the Pavilion came to be recognised as the common home of many valuable experiences and became a space in which visitors interested in development could find people with whom to discuss issues related to environment, discrimination and poverty, and discover innovative solutions and networks of actors involved in various initiatives that provide hope for a better future.

*Territory* was the connecting thread of the exhibitions and meetings, understood not only as physical space, but also as a fabric of social relations, history, landscape and human capacity. Many actors illustrated, with their concrete examples, the idea that secure and good food, high quality development and beauty are strictly linked: the beauty of a landscape, preserved by those who live and work there; urbanization that enhances the cultural and historical heritage of the territory; the spaces that frame the timing of human activities; art products enriched by the territory's culture; human relations, made attractive by the common commitment to improve the quality of life and the environment.

A territory is the living place for producing food in ways that value the traditional culture and knowledge of indigenous peoples. It is the fabric that links agriculture, environment, and the capacities of people and local communities. It is the foundation on which social and inclusive economies develop, which increase work opportunities in a sustainable way, and also fulfil the strategic function of protecting and maintaining the environment. It is the area where local administrations facilitate citizens' participation in development processes and the formation of public policies, and that open themselves to international partnerships with other local communities, equally engaged in endogenous development. These are some of the themes developed in the Pavilion and in this issue of our journal.

The title of the Pavilion, which was merely a slogan at the beginning, progressively became a strategic axis: working in a network among local communities that aim at making their own territory attractive and welcoming means working from the ground to build a national and global development capable of effectively reducing poverty, discriminations, conflicts and violence.

In the final meeting of October 24<sup>th</sup>, the partners of the Pavilion decided to create an International Group (made up of representatives of governments, international organizations, institutions, associations and the private sector) to work on the creation of an international system for the development cooperation of local territories. Readers will also find in this issue the Manifesto that these Partners produced. The Manifesto proposes a path to move from the current culture of disparate projects, each going its own way towards a partial objective, to a culture of integrated development of local territories. Only this latter can link separate projects

to each other and make it possible for everyone to contribute to reaching the common objective of inclusive and sustainable development.

And it is on this theme of the development of local territories that the articles in this issue make their contribution. Contradicting a cliché, each experience described is based on the refusal of the idea that development is the automatically positive result of economic growth. To the contrary, they indicate that the obsession for increased quantity is a sure way to augment damage to the environment, social cohesion and the economy itself. And they invite local, national and international institutions, not only to encourage, facilitate and support the good practices that the actors of these experiences have put in place, but also to take them into consideration in developing public policies.

Behind each article, there is the consciousness that going in the direction of high quality development is difficult and that it is necessary to overcome not only enormous political obstacles, but also practical ones. Even those who want to go in this direction, in fact, are influenced by methods, techniques and knowledge born from the current mentality. This is the same mentality that spread the obsession for growth in terms of *quantity* and that is not yet able to put needs, subjectivity, people and the good functioning of human communities first. As a result, those who want change, first of all, have to change their own way of thinking, of interpreting phenomena, of choosing objectives and working methods. In this process, the worlds of research and education are called on to assume their responsibility. In many countries, experiences that link development actors with universities and research centres exist. It would be desirable that they form a network and become real “laboratories”, where it is possible to contribute to building and disseminating knowledge, practical approaches and ideas about the policies and practices that can make territories more attractive and welcoming.

The culture of development we need today, to a large extent, still needs to be built. Each article of this issue is a contribution to the construction of this new culture.

Enjoy reading!